



Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
Horseferry Road
London

Sent by email to: DFT.Ministers@dft.gov.uk

10th February, 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

Re-opening of RIS2

In light of major changes both in government policy and wider circumstances, we are writing to formally request that you re-open the Second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2).

As paragraph 6.29 of [National Highways' licence](#) makes clear:

“Major variations, which would affect the Licence holder’s overall funding, have a material effect on the integrity of the RIS or otherwise compromise the Licence holder’s ability to comply with the RIS, would require the RIS to be re-opened.”

Obviously, this condition was already met at Spending Review 21, when the capital enhancements budget in RIS2 was reduced by £3bn, nearly a quarter. Since then, the pausing of the smart motorways programme and further delays to decisions on other schemes mean further major variations in the RIS2 programme and spending.

Moreover, the changes in circumstances are not simply financial, including:

- **COVID-19:** although the scale of the pandemic only started to become clear days after RIS2 was set, it highlighted the significant benefits of reduced motor traffic for public health and nature.
- **Safety:** National Highways is not on track to meet its KSI target, once the effect of the pandemic is disregarded. RIS2 fails to prioritise safety on the most dangerous sections of the SRN, instead investing in smart motorways: highlighting National Highway's failure to base road danger reduction on robust evidence.

Besides these significant changes in circumstance, there are other major changes to government policy that require reopening RIS2, including:

- **Increased medium-term decarbonisation:** The setting of net zero aligned carbon targets for 2030 and 2035 means there is a greater urgency to reduce carbon emissions more quickly. To achieve this, the Climate Change Committee's analysis stated that *"a more comprehensive set of measures and more measurable targets (including on total car-kilometres) are needed to give confidence that the continuing trend of traffic growth can be reversed."* The Government's failure to adopt advice on tackling agricultural and aviation emissions means the surface transport sector needs to work even harder.
- **Changed transport policy:** The Transport Decarbonisation Plan's priorities to use cars less and shift freight to rail represent the biggest policy shift in decades, which is most welcome. The target for half of all urban journeys to be walked or cycled by 2030 requires radical action before 2025 and cuts away any justification for urban schemes in RIS2 such as the A38 Derby junctions.
- **Environment Act 2021:** Although detailed targets under this world leading law are yet to be set, it is clear that ever increasing traffic is incompatible with nature recovery. Much faster and more ambitious action is also required to reduce air pollution to existing let alone tighter limit values.
- **Devolved nations:** The Welsh roads review and Scottish target to reduce motor traffic by 20% by 2030 both have major ramifications for England that need to be thought through.
- **Levelling up:** Given how RIS2 enhancements are focused in the south and how road-building provides few benefits for disadvantaged communities, it is not surprising how it barely received a mention in the White Paper. In light of post-pandemic fiscal constraints, it is vital RIS funding is reallocated to public transport which has an obvious role to play in levelling up, particularly in the north.

The combination of changing travel demand as we recover from the pandemic and measures to put surface transport on a net zero trajectory create uncertainty and will have particular impacts at scheme and route level. This means that the assumptions underpinning not just schemes, but also some maintenance and renewals, will need reviewing.

Without action, the considerable uncertainty faced by the supply chain will only grow. Pretending there is not uncertainty about RIS2 will not make it go away and makes it harder for companies in the sector to plan ahead. Indeed, a do-nothing approach offers the worst of both worlds: a construction sector unable to plan, while bus, coach and train operators shed jobs.

In the circumstances it is overwhelmingly clear that the changes are so fundamental, the current RIS2 cannot continue. We therefore invite you to make a statement to Parliament setting out the above reasons by the Spring 2022 forecast on 23 March, as the first step to varying it.

We look forward to a substantive response within four weeks of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Todd
Director
Transport Action Network

cc

Baroness Vere, Roads Minister

John Larkinson, ORR Chief Executive

Huw Merriman MP, Transport Committee Chair

Philip Dunne MP, Environment Audit Committee Chair

Neil Parish MP, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee Chair

Baroness Parminter, Environment and Climate Change Committee Chair

Chris Start, Climate Change Committee Chief Executive